

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS

UPON

THE "LECTURES

ON

PHYSIOLOGY, ZOOLOGY,

AND

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MAN,

DELIVERED AT THE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS,

BY

W. LAWRENCE, F. R. S.

PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY AND SURGERY TO THE COLLEGE,

&c. &c. &c."

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THAT GENTLEMAN ;

WITH

A CONCLUDING LETTER

TO HIS PUPILS.

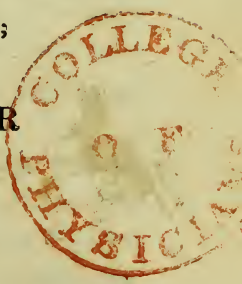
BY

ONE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED CHRISTIANS.

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CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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CURSORY OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

LETTER I.

SIR,

THE ability and information which you have displayed in your Lectures at the Royal College of Surgeons, have deservedly placed you amongst the brightest living ornaments of your profession. To a consummate knowledge of those sciences which more immediately relate to anatomical and physiological inquiries, you have joined a taste for general literature, and shewn a considerable acquaintance with the history and progress of Philosophy.

The opinions of a man thus gifted by nature and polished by education, are calculated not only to command the attention of the Public, but, in some degree, to influence its judgment. When I consider, indeed, the nature of that audience to which these lectures were addressed, consisting chiefly of young men just entering on life, many of whom are unfixed in their principles, and of which but a very small part can be supposed to have formed calm and deliberate

opinions on religious and moral subjects; I am disposed to regard you almost in the light of a dictator, and to consider you as invested with an office of extraordinary and undefined responsibility. By the range which you have taken of delivering your sentiments on political and theological subjects, you have voluntarily exposed yourself to the criticisms of those who have no immediate connexion with your professional studies: for, ignorant as I am of physiology and anatomy, I can perceive in your researches the evils which they portend to society in general, and to the morals of your own profession in particular.

From your Introductory Lecture, I learn, that Mr. Abernethy has also been struck with this dangerous tendency in your speculations; but remember, Sir, that I charge you “with no unworthy *design* of propagating opinions detrimental to society.” Far be from me to impute to you such wicked and malignant motives. I doubt not that you are engaged in the most honourable of all occupations, that of diffusing what appears to you to be important truth. It is with the effects, not the intentions, of your writings that I have any controversy; and, as you profess to be a lover “of fair argument and free discussion,” I trust that you will not disdain to give me a patient hearing.

I repeat, Sir, that I have no concern with your professional studies; and that, if you had confined yourself to a statement of anatomical

facts or physiological observations, I should have felt myself totally incapable of estimating the value of your Lectures. But, since you have travelled into the regions of history and morals, have denounced the abstractions of metaphysics, and ridiculed the records of revelation, I feel myself at liberty to offer you my opinions on these subjects, and I shall do it with the greater freedom, because I am satisfied that your time and attention must have been chiefly devoted to other inquiries. In your reply to the charges of Mr. Abernethy, you have facetiously alluded to the carrier who proposed a fortification of leather in a council of war. I fear, Sir, that many of your readers will be disposed to turn this allusion against yourself. In your ardor for physiological studies, you have contrived to destroy the value of almost every other science. In your hands, ancient history is but a maze of obscurity,* and modern history but a perversion of government.† Christianity is chiefly of value as the stepmother of quakerism;‡ and the whole science of mind is represented a Utopian research. Indeed, Sir, as we are not all intended for surgeons and physicians, you should have shewn some little regard for those who may become your patients, as well as your pupils. As it is not every man who can enjoy the opportunity of studying human nature in a Caucasian or Mongolian variety, you might as well have

* P. 254.

† P. 19. 37. 42.

‡ P. 43.

left us to the belief that the knowledge of antiquity was to be derived through the vulgar medium of ancient history. What is to become of the morals of the populace, if they once should adopt your opinions? "Take away from the mind of men " the operations of the five external senses, and " the functions of the brain, and what will be " left behind?"* What truly, Sir, but the jail and the gallows—neither of which would long deter from crimes and atrocities; and you would then find that the "*odium theologicum*"† " was not " the most concentrated essence of animosity " and rancour."

But, perhaps, you will reply, that these were mysteries intended only for the initiated, and that your pupils alone were to receive the benefit of such instructions. I fear that this apology will prove of little service in your defence. It requires no great intimacy with the state of the metropolis, to know, that young men of this description do not require to be told of the intolerance of religious sects, nor to be furnished with excuses for religious indifference. Indeed, Sir, you might have found more appropriate and more profitable topics, than to rail at the priests of former times, and to compare the discussions of religion to the quarrels of the ladies. ‡ From what is generally understood of the morals of too many of those young gentlemen who walk the hospitals, and frequent the medical schools of

* P. 7.

† P. 10.

‡ P. 10, 11.

our capital, the Public will not be inclined to thank you for your ingenious apology for sceptical opinions, nor your reiterated sneers at the government and religion of your country.

In accepting the office of a Professor at the Royal College of Surgeons, you were not indeed bound to accede to the creed of the Established Church, nor compelled to express your admiration of the civil institutions of the English nation. You were still at liberty to enjoy your opinions in private, nay, to publish them to the world in any separate and independent form. But, I appeal to your sense of decorum and propriety, whether it be fair or expedient to transform the professor's chair into the seat of the scorner and the sceptic? Suppose, Sir, that I had sent my son to attend upon your Lectures, that your fame and reputation as Anatomical and Surgical Professor, had determined him to give you the preference above all your brethren; should not I be shocked, on his return, to find that his religious principles were destroyed, and his moral principles corrupted; that he had ceased to admire the constitution of his country; and that he had gained his professional knowledge at the expense of all dignified and elevated moral sentiment?

It would be a poor satisfaction for me to learn, that you had no such nefarious design; that all you wished was, to divest him of preconceived prejudices, and to free him from national partialities. I had sent him to perfect

himself in anatomical and surgical acquirements, not to be made the disciple of Hume or Volney, of Voltaire or Gibbon. Indeed, Sir, you have completely travelled out of your record, by endeavouring to influence the moral and political sentiments of your pupils. Instead of contemplating physiology, in its reference to surgery and medicine, you have exhibited it as the road to materialism in metaphysics, to faction in politics, and to infidelity in religion. These are grave and serious charges ; and if I cannot substantiate them, I shall be content to rank as a bigot and calumniator. But if, in the following Letters, it shall be proved that these are the natural consequences of your speculations, then, as a man of honour, you will feel yourself driven to the following dilemma : either you will, for the future, refrain from expressing such opinions in your character as Royal Professor, or, you will renounce a situation so totally incompatible with the display of these sentiments in politics and religion.

I remain, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER II.

SIR,

IN your introductory Lecture, you have endeavoured to establish the doctrine of materialism in its grossest and most disgusting form, as will be apparent from the following quotation:—"Where then shall we find the proofs of the mind's independence on the bodily structure? of that mind, which, like the corporeal form, is infantile in the child, manly in the adult, sick and debilitated in disease, frenzied or melancholy in the madman, enfeebled in the decline of life, doting in decrepitude, and *annihilated by death?*" p. 7.

Before you had resolved to publish such opinions, you should, at least, have inquired who they are that believe in the independence of the mind on the bodily structure? You are fighting only against the followers of Berkeley: the disciples neither of Locke nor Dr. Reid, nor any other school in metaphysics that I am acquainted with, believe in such arrant contradictions. But, it is one thing, Sir, to believe in the connexion of the mind with the body, and another to assert their identity. This connexion we call life; but the mind itself constitutes the soul of man. However you may please

to denounce these opinions as mere “immaterial abstractions,” you should consider that they are at least venerable from their antiquity, and popular from their general reception amongst mankind. To do you justice, indeed, I find that you have admitted this to be the fact. You endeavour to qualify the above sentence by stating it as only delivered in a *physiological* meaning, and that the “theological doctrine of the soul, and its separate existence, has nothing to do with this physiological question, but rests on a species of proof altogether different.” And you afterwards very candidly admit “that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, was fully recognized in all the religions of the ancient world,” &c. p. 8, 9, &c.

I do not pretend, Sir, to reconcile this sentence with the general principles which are advanced in your Lectures; but, after a very attentive perusal of them, I am impressed with the conviction, that their general tendency goes to destroy this belief of the soul’s immortality; and that I am not mistaken in this opinion, I shall beg leave to refer to your own expressions.

In p. 60, you inform us that “life is merely the active state of the animal structure; that it denotes what is apparent to our senses, and cannot be applied to the offspring of metaphysics or immaterial abstractions.” You then declare that the *anima* means nothing more

than wind or breath, and in the same way the Latin *spiritus*, or original of our spirit, from *spiro*, to breathe, means merely “breath; the “same is the case with the Greek *πνευμα*, and “this is the original sensible object out of “which all the abstractions and fancies, all the “verbal sophistry and metaphysical puzzles “about spirit have proceeded.”*

If you had continued to observe the distinction between animal life, and the thinking faculty, in other parts of your work, I should have quietly passed over this harmless materialism, however I might have questioned its reality. But, when you proceed, in the subsequent parts of your Lectures, to warn your pupils against† “metaphysical chimeras, and “the intrusion of immaterial agencies;”—when you denounce all belief in these agencies as the ‡ “regions of imagination, and the poetic ground

* For these wondrous discoveries, Mr. L. is indebted to the philological speculations of Mr. Tooke, who by the same decomposition of words reduced *right* into no other than *rectum* (regitum) the past participle of the Latin verb *regere*; so that *right*, in this vocabulary, means nothing more than the thing ordered: and *just* from *jubere*, is exactly of a similar import. By the same analysis, truth means nothing more than the thing *trowed*; and instead, says this great philosopher, “of its “being a rare commodity on earth, there is nothing but truth “in the world.” Reader! If thou art grave, I would refer thee for a confutation of these etymological speculations to the Fifth Essay of Dugald Stewart’s *Philosophical Essays*; if thou art merry, to Dean Swift’s account of the studies in the Academy of Lagado, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Part III. Chap. 5.

† P. 78 and 189.

‡ P. 83.

“ of physiology ;—when you ridicule those who
 “ think it impossible that the living organic
 “ structure should have vital properties, without
 “ some extrinsic aid ;”—when you assert that *
 “ life consists in organization, and that such or-
 “ ganization is destroyed by death ;” when you
 sneer at the belief †“ of thought as an imma-
 “ terial agent, and represent its office as no bet-
 “ ter than that of a sinecure ;”—when you deride
 the supposition of an “ immaterial *mind*,” and
 assert that ‡“ mankind are superior to brutes
 “ only on account of superior organization ;”—
 above all, when you speak of death §“ as that
 “ awful moment from which all sentient beings
 “ shrink back with instinctive dread, *as the ter-*
 “ *mination of their existence ;*”—from these and
 similar passages, I am compelled, however un-
 willingly, to draw the conclusion, that you have
 no fixed or settled belief in the immateriality of
 the soul, or its continuance in a future state of
 being.

Certain, at least, I am, whatever may be
 your own opinion on this subject, such would
 be the natural effect produced on your hearers.
 Surely, Sir, if you had not wished these mis-
 chievous consequences to be drawn, you should
 have blended a few cautions and admonitions to
 the young and unwary. These moral observa-
 tions would, at least, have been as appropriate
 as allusions to the Green-bag conspiracy, ¶ or

* P. 93.

† P. 105.

‡ P. 109.

§ P. 577.

¶ P. 12.

to forgotten disputes in the Greek church.* Since you have condescended to smile so often at priests, and to anticipate "the destruction of all creeds and articles of faith,"† it would not have been much out of your way, to have interspersed a few remarks on the dangers, whether real or imaginary, which are generally supposed to belong to the doctrines of materialism.

I am strongly disposed to think that you have not as yet made up your mind on these interesting topics, but that you indulge in that philosophical *επεχρη* which is at once the pride and torture of its possessor. And what leads me to this supposition is, the great uncertainty which I find in the statement of your opinions, and the impossibility of arriving at any fixed conclusions respecting them. Thus, in p. 13, whilst you assert in the text, "that the foundations of morality and religion are secure, by their natural and firm establishment in the feelings and propensities, in the common sense and mutual wants of mankind," you give the authority of Pascal, in a note, for maintaining them merely on the grounds of revealed religion, and assert, "that the immortality of the soul, the great truths of religion, and the fundamental principles of morals, cannot be demonstrably proved by mere reason," &c. Surely, Sir, before you attempt to direct the opinions of others,

* P. 10.

† P. 96.

you should choose and determine your own. I shall take occasion, in other parts of these Letters, to shew, that the same uncertainty pervades your opinions, not only on moral subjects, but in those departments of knowledge which relate more immediately to your professional studies. But, at present, I would only beg you to reflect whether you are authorized, in this sceptical state of mind, to enter upon topics which are not essentially connected with anatomical and surgical pursuits. Can it answer any one useful or honourable purpose, to unsettle the opinions of young men, who are just entering on the world, and who are exposed to all the temptations of a luxurious metropolis? If your physiological principles have led you to this state of doubt and uncertainty, why should you think it necessary to spread the infection? Cannot you be content to enjoy the reputation of an able professor of anatomy and surgery, without aspiring to the fame of an intellectual philosopher?

You confess yourself an ardent admirer of the French and continental schools, and are evidently fond of adducing the names of Voltaire and Volney, in defence of your opinions. I trust that I am not insensible to the high literary merits of these and other foreigners; but if in your admiration of their writings, you expect to introduce amongst us the spirit of their speculations, I trust, and confidently believe, that you will be signally defeated in your

endeavours. Englishmen, Sir, may sometimes carry their nationality to an unwarrantable height, and I think that you have detected something of this over-patriotic spirit in the writings of Mr. Abernethy. But these minor faults would be ill-redeemed by throwing off our alarms against those who have filled Europe and the world with disorder and desolation. Experience has convinced us these "charming" writers, are not less dangerous from the seductive embellishments, with which they have adorned their principles. Whilst we admire their taste and genius, we are not disposed to embrace their scepticism and irreligion; and if you, or any man should attempt to hold them up in these kingdoms, as the guides and instructors of our youth, I feel confident, that you would but sacrifice your own reputation at the shrine of your attachment to foreigners.

But it is not only France and the continent which are to be preferred to this country, we are also to be humbled and taunted by the superior excellence of our American descendants. Truly, Sir, this is going beyond your official duties, merely to insult the civil and religious institutions of Great Britain. If such be your private opinions, why are they to be delivered from the theatre of the Royal College? Why should your pupils be instructed to consider Europe * "as one great state prison;"—to con-

template our governments “as the worn out
 “despotisms of the old world;”—why should the
 United States be insidiously contrasted with
 this country, as the spot * “where religion is
 “in all its fervour, without needing an alliance
 “with the State, and where the law commands
 “by the respect which it inspires, without
 “being enforced by military power?”

No doubt you are at the most perfect liberty
 to enjoy your own opinion on these or any other
 subjects. We do not complain of them as con-
 stituting your private sentiments, but as being
 brought forward in an official manner, and from
 the chair of the Royal College. Neither you,
 nor any other man, have a moral right to use
 such a public office, for the purpose of degrad-
 ing and vilifying the civil and religious institu-
 tions of their country. When our children are
 sent to acquire a knowledge of surgery and
 anatomy, we do not expect them to be hearing
 tirades against the manners, the laws, and the
 religious principles of their ancestors. It is not
 for me to say how others should feel or act on
 such an occasion, but I am a plain man, and
 I will honestly give my opinion. If I had the
 honour to be a member of the court which
 elects to this office, I could not conscientiously
 allow you to fill the station. † “However flat-
 “tering to your vanity to wear the gown, I

* P. 489.

† P. 3.

“ would take you at your word, and with all my admiration for your talents, “ would allow you “ to strip it off,” rather than behold the minds and morals of so many young men endangered by speculations which are subversive of their temporal happiness, and their eternal welfare.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

SIR,

THE multifarious subjects of your Lectures will render me, I fear, somewhat desultory and unconnected in my remarks on those inquiries, which are incidentally introduced into your work. I have already confessed, that I have no pretensions to criticize your surgical and anatomical knowledge. In this respect, you command my admiration, by the extent of your acquaintance with foreign authors, and my implicit deference to that tribunal which has already assigned you so large a share of reputation at home. But, when you step beyond your own profession, to interfere with morals,

or politics, or theology, I must confess, that you instantly remind me of Pope's observation :

One science only will one genius fit,
So vast is art, so narrow human wit.

You have scarcely entered on the subject of your second Lecture, before you display the extent of your attachment to the doctrine of materialism. How far your late friend Dr. Gordon would have admitted * " that Dr. " Spurzheim, on account of the prevalence of " war, was amply justified in having marked " out so considerable a tract in his map of the " human brain, for the abode of destructiveness, " and its near neighbour, and close ally, combativeness," I will not pretend to decide. These are " high matters" which none but those who are initiated into the mysteries of your profession can determine. As a plain man, however, it does not appear to me why you should blame kings and legislators for pursuing " a practice so essentially characteristic " of human nature," and to which they are irresistibly determined by the organization of their faculties. It is singular, indeed, that the quakers should be devoid of these celebrated tracts in the human brain, but I see not why they should be praised for this lucky arrangement of their cerebra. You are particularly

* P. 42.

unfortunate in adducing these Christian Mystics, "as holding no unintelligible articles of faith." p. 43, *note*.

Though you are so unwilling to allow of any mysteries relating to "immaterial agencies," yet you find no difficulty in the admission of the most unintelligible jargon, as explanatory of the existing phenomena of nature. Thus to account for the existence of certain parts, particularly in some marsupial animals, where the function does not exist, or where the parts are not employed, you recur to the ideal fancy* of a "certain mode or original type," which had been fixed on as "the pattern" of these analogous beings.—Truly, Sir, these are something like the "eternal forms" of the ancient metaphysics, or the "internal moulds" of Buffon, or that "principle of order," which Paley has so successfully ridiculed in his "Natural Theology." But I am inclined to think that you hold the writings of this author in no great repute, since you endeavour to decry the value of these physico-theological speculations, and to withdraw the minds of your pupils from the contemplation of final causes.†

Now, when it is considered, that the writings of these "short-sighted" physico-theologists are of all others the best adapted to imbue the minds of young men in your profession with sentiments of love and veneration for the Author

* P. 1, 49, and p. 94. † P. 51.

of nature, I do not think that the public will be inclined to thank you for attempting to ridicule their merits, or diminish their influence. If you had contented yourself with merely rectifying their occasional errors, we should have felt obliged to you for your superior means of information; but when even Haller* cannot escape your sneers on this subject, it is plain, that you mean to treat the whole body of these writers with derision and contempt.

“ To talk of life as independent of an animal
 “ body, to speak of a function without reference to an appropriate organ,” you say,
 “ is physiologically absurd, &c.—What should
 “ we think of abstracting elasticity, cohesion,
 “ gravity, and bestowing on them a separate
 “ existence from the bodies in which these properties are seen?” Since you have so roundly put this question, let it be as roundly answered. We should think much more highly of the man who viewed them as existing apart, than he who confounded them together. The co-existence of things will not prove their identity. Even, if it should be allowed, that these are the necessary and inseparable properties of matter, it would not show that these properties were to be confounded with their subjects.

You conclude this Lecture, by recommending the works of Haller to the attention of the English student. Indeed, Sir, it would be

well if you had imitated, not only the experimental research, but the piety of “this father and founder of modern physiology.” Haller was a believer not only in all the great truths of natural religion, but a zealous advocate for the truth and authority of the Christian revelation. In an admirable work addressed to his daughter, he has left us his deliberate opinions on this subject. “Your father, who now addresses you, during the course of a long life, spent in continual labour and study, thought himself obliged to consecrate some of his leisure hours, to inquiries of this nature. The result of which was, that those truths which have been called in question, always appeared to him the more evident and respectable, the more attentively he examined the proofs and reasons on which they were founded.” “The rock of salvation is solidity itself. It cannot be shaken, either by the doubts of the sceptic, or the sarcasms of the sneerer.”

I remain, &c.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

I MUST acknowledge, that your third Lecture abounds with many solid and striking observations on the extent and limits of human science as connected with physiology: in which, as you remark,* “we follow the links of an
“endless chain, and by holding fast to it, we
“may ascend from one link to another; but
“the point of suspension is not within the
“reach of our feeble powers.”

“To call life,” you continue, “a property
“of organization would be unmeaning—it
“would be nonsense.”—Now, Sir, permit me to confront this opinion with the following sentence in the ensuing Lecture.† “Such a kind of
“composition (viz. of solids and fluids) and such
“an arrangement of the constituent parts, is
“called organization; and as the vital phenomena are only such motions as are consistent
“with these material arrangements, life, so far
“as our experience goes, is necessarily connected with organization. Life pre-supposes
“organization, as the movement of a watch
“pre-supposes wheels, levers, and other mechanism of the instrument.”

* P. 82. † P. 93, and p. 104.

I will not attempt to reconcile these contradictory statements, but I conclude they are specimens of that * “variety which is the source
“of every thing which is beautiful and interest-
“ing in the external world—the foundation of
“the whole moral fabric of the universe.”

On these principles it is no difficult task to account for your dislike of “all attempts at
“making mankind act or think alike.” No wonder you cannot endure “those legislators
“and rulers of the world, who have persisted
“for centuries in endeavouring to reduce the
“opinions and the belief of their subjects to
“certain fancied standards of perfection, and
“to impress on human thought that dreary
“sameness and dull monotony which all the
“discipline and rigor of a religious sect has
“been hardly able to maintain in its followers,
“&c.” Indeed, Sir, this would be a fatal era for scepticism, if the success of such projects could be realized. “You cannot doubt there-
“fore that a day will arrive when the attempt
“at imposing uniformity of opinions will be
“deemed as irrational and as little desirable, as
“to endeavour at producing sameness of face
“or stature.” †

Passing over those remarks at present, which relate to the difference of a species and variety, I shall confine my observations to the concluding parts of this Lecture, in which you put

* P. 95.

† P. 96.

forth all your powers in defence of materialism. As to your arguments, Sir, I must confess they lie within a very small compass, being almost confined to the following sentence—"that unless we allow the brain to be identified with thought,* its office is only one remove above a sinecure; it is a kind of porter, entrusted to open the door, and introduce new comers to the master of the house, who takes on himself the entire charge of receiving, entertaining, and employing them."

After this, you most earnestly exhort the student to enter on this subject with a serious and earnest love of truth, but who would believe that you commence the investigation with attempts at ridicule and tales of impiety? The story of the "homunculus" and the syringe, as a piece of wit, belongs to Sterne and Tristram Shandy; but as an endeavour to raise the mirth of your pupils "at the little mortal who has a soul to be saved," it is exclusively your own. You are probably, Sir, the first Lecturer at this Royal College who has ever brought forward subjects of this nature as illustrations of Physiology; and I trust your own sense of shame, conjoined to the indignation of the public, will leave you no successor. You may discourse as you please on the contracted cranium and the retreating forehead of the unfortunate negro; but I am sure there is no rational being, however

* P. 106.

low in the scale of intellect, who would not condemn such allusions, when introduced before such an audience, merely for the purpose of mirth and irreligion.

To put a finishing stroke to this controversy, you refer to Pathology as affording the most signal evidences in favour of materialism. "They who consider the mental operations as acts of an immaterial being, and thus disconnect the sound state of the mind from organization, act very consistently in disjoining insanity also from the corporeal structure, and in representing it as a disease, not of the brain, but of the mind. Thus we come to disease of an immaterial being, for which, suitably enough, moral treatment has been recommended." Yes, Sir, we accept your challenge, and are obliged to you for this appeal. The Retreat at York, and many other receptacles for insane persons, will furnish you with the result. But here, as in every other part of the argument, you misstate the question. We do not disjoin the corporeal organs from the mental faculties; nor is it found that moral treatment will suffice without the aids of medicine. It is the conjunction of *both* which affords the best means of recovery; and for this plain reason—that they apply to both the mental and corporeal parts of our constitution.

You finish your Lecture by disclaiming all regard to the expediency and effects of divulging any hurtful opinions, supposing them to be true.

The supposition is monstrous, and in direct opposition to the inductive spirit of the soundest philosophy. If these opinions be true, it is also expedient to publish them to the world; but if they are calculated to destroy the hopes and happiness of mankind,—to corrupt and demoralize society; then their falsity is confessed and apparent—“by their fruits you may know them.”

I remain, &c.

LETTER V.

SIR,

IN the first chapter of your “Natural History of Man,” you have very justly defined the labours and subdivisions of those who cultivate the different departments of this science. * “The anatomist and physiologist unfold the construction and uses of the corporeal mechanism; the surgeon and physician describe its disease; while the metaphysician and moralist employ themselves with those functions which constitute the mind with the moral

“ sentiments. Man in society, his progress in
 “ the various countries and ages of the world,
 “ his multiplication and extension, are the pro-
 “ vince of the historian and political econo-
 “ mist.”

After this just and accurate classification, we are surprised to find you in the suspicious character of a monopolist, especially as you have determined “ that this labour is much too extensive to be properly executed by any individual.” If any proof were wanting of the truth of this opinion, you have certainly confirmed it by your own example, and have shewn to the most sceptical of your pupils, “ that the inscription on the temple of Delphi contained “ a more difficult and important precept, than “ all the books of the Moralists,” p. 123.

We are obliged to you, however, for venturing so far to differ from Monboddo and Rousseau, as to assign us a distinct species from the monkey and oranoutang; yet I cannot feel very proud of the following zoological definition of human nature.—“ *Order*, bimanum (two-handed).—*Genus*, homo; the *species*, single, with several varieties.—*Characters*: erect stature, two hands, “ teeth approximated and of equal length; the inferior incisors perpendicular; prominent chin, “ rational, endowed with speech, unarmed, defenceless.” Whether Linnæus might have been satisfied with these circumstances as “ so obvious and abundantly sufficient to characterise “ man,” and to distinguish him from the ape

and baboon, I will not pretend to determine; but I am certain that common mortals, after studying this description of their nature, are not likely to rise in their own estimation, or to attempt * “the apparently impracticable task assigned by the poet,

“Go, wond’rous creature! mount where science guides,
“Weigh air, mete earth, and calculate the tides.”

To be serious, Sir, these attempts to characterise man by his animal, rather than by his mental functions, will always appear ludicrous to those who are not initiated into the art of degrading their own species. We carry about with us a firm conviction, that these are the mere accidents, not the essentials of our nature; and that however proper it may be to mention them as the technical statements of physiology, yet that they are totally inadequate to the description of a being who feels himself “but a little lower than the angels.”

You have an easy method, however, for determining the superiority of our species, as compared with other animals. A pair of scales, with a few small weights, is all the apparatus which is required. † “The largest brain of a horse weighs one pound seven ounces; the smallest brain in an adult, two pounds five ounces and a quarter.” Indeed, Sir, these are noble discoveries, whether they originate in

* P. 233.

† P. 193.

England or in Germany; yet it is mortifying to learn, * “that it is hardly to be expected these
 “ matters will receive any clear elucidation,
 “ while we continue so ignorant as at present of
 “ the functions executed by the different parts
 “ of the encephalon.”

Remember, Sir, that if these statements appear ridiculous, it is yourself who have contrived to render a grave science the subject of drollery. If you had adduced these facts merely as physiological data, they would still have retained all their importance in relation to anatomy and pathology; but when you bring them forward as illustrative of morals, or theology, or metaphysics—oh! then we cannot command the solemnity of our muscles, and in spite of the dignity of a Royal Professor, we are obliged to give vent to our emotions.

Towards the conclusion of this chapter, you offer some remarks on what you term † “an interesting part of the female structure.” I am sorry to observe that here, and in several other parts of your Lecture, you indulge in certain licentious allusions, which are very foreign to the modesty and sobriety of real science. You need not be informed, Sir, that there is a certain technical phraseology belonging to these subjects which has not the slightest tendency to awaken any impure ideas. It is not usual, I believe, in medical books, to speak of ‡ “the rites

* P. 194. † P. 201. ‡ P. 228.

“ of Venus,” nor to enlarge on the size of the breasts, * “ even in this pious age of societies “ for suppressing vice and the distributing “ bibles;” nor to discourse on certain other facts in the same page, “ relating to an interesting point in natural history.” Indeed, Sir, as I am not a surgical professor, I cannot pretend to follow you through your various succeeding details; but I remember something in Juvenal of the “ *maxima debetur puero reverentia*,” which I think might have excused your account in page 419, and might have saved you the trouble of copying certain lascivious notes from Warton’s Theocritus! †

The very nature of these particulars forbid my adducing these passages at length. I will not, for the sake of becoming more perspicuous, raise a blush on the cheek of modesty, or afford a single jest and gratification to the profligate. If you read the character of Gibbon, as drawn by Mr. Porson, in his Letters to Travis, you will have some faint conception of the connexion of infidelity with these licentious descriptions. In the mean time, Sir, I would refer it to your sense of decorum and propriety, whether you should lend your office to awakening any of those emotions which are too apt to arise on this subject, and whether, considering the natural opportunities and tendencies of your profession, you should not be particularly delicate

* P. 419.

† P. 293.

on these subjects relating to sexual distinctions. But I feel the consequences of my resolution—the dread of offering examples, has rendered my argument somewhat dubious.—*Brevis esse laboro—obscurus fio.*

I remain, &c.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

You next proceed to investigate a very interesting and important question, viz. whether different kinds of men were originally created; or whether we are to account for the diversities which exist amongst mankind by the operations of subsequent physical and moral causes. On the first supposition, as you remark, there would be different species of the human race; whereas on the latter, they will form only different varieties of the same species.

It is your next endeavour to shew that this question must be exclusively determined by the principles of physiology, independent of all argument *à priori*, and of all national and historical traditions. You then attempt to ridicule those “*regulæ philosophandi*,” which were laid down by Newton, and which would

lead us to the conclusion * "that as nature
 " does nothing in vain, she would not give her-
 " self the trouble to create several different
 " stocks, when one family would be sufficient
 " to colonize the world in so short a time." It
 is rather unfortunate for your consistency, that
 in a subsequent part of your work, you should
 adopt that very kind of argument which you
 here deride, † " We should openly violate the
 " rules of philosophizing, which direct us to as-
 " sign the same causes for internal effects of the
 " same kind, and not to admit more causes
 " than are sufficient for explaining phenomena,
 " if we recurred, for the purpose of explaining
 " the varieties of man, to the perfectly gratu-
 " itous assumption of originally different spe-
 " cies; or called to our aid the operation of
 " climate and other external influences."

The last member of this sentence will per-
 fectly startle some of your readers, who will
 not be able to comprehend what your opinions
 can be on this interesting subject, especially
 when you proceed to observe, " that if it be
 " allowed all men are of the same species,
 " it does not follow they all descend from the
 " same family." The truth is, Sir, that, like
 Mr. Hume, you furnish us only " with a scep-
 " tical solution of certain sceptical doubts."
 You have not been able to make up your own
 mind on the subject. If you had openly ad-

* P. 245.

† P. 515.

‡ P. 247.

mitted the conclusions of the soundest philosophy, it would have exemplified too near an agreement with the account of Moses; but your shame and good sense would not permit you to run into the contrary absurdity. Is not this the real statement of your difficulties?

Since "these principles of general physiology" have been so little able to lead you to any sure and satisfactory conclusions, it will naturally be thought that they are by no means sufficient to afford us the requisite instruction concerning the origin of mankind. By common mortals, indeed, it has always been supposed that ancient history was the safest guide in subjects of this description; and that notwithstanding all the obscurity attending its details, it forms our best and surest director in the knowledge of antiquity.

But to prepare your pupils for these sceptical opinions, it was first necessary to shake their confidence "in the Hebrew Scriptures, as writings composed with the assistance of Divine Inspiration, and therefore commanding our implicit assent."* For this purpose you inform them, that this account of the creation† "has the allegorical character common to Eastern compositions," and that "there is an irreconcilable opposition between the passions and sentiments ascribed to the Deity by Moses, and that religion of peace and love which is unfolded by the Evangelists." To

* P. 247. † P. 248.

complete your argument, and at once demolish their belief in Revelation, you pronounce "the representation of all the animals when brought before Adam," and their subsequent collection by Noah in the Ark, as "zoologically impossible." p. 249—254.

It is not my intention, Sir, on the present occasion, to enter with you into any discussion on the force or futility of these objections; but merely to remonstrate with you on the danger and impropriety of mixing up questions of this description with those inquiries which relate to physiology, in its connexion with surgery and medicine. You must allow me to doubt, Sir, whether even *your* "knowledge of the original and other Oriental languages,"* qualifies you to become judge in matters which are so entirely foreign to your profession. But, whatever may be your acquirements, you must know, that those whom you address are altogether incompetent from their youth and imperfect education, to form any just or deliberate opinion on this subject. It is unfair and uncandid in the highest degree, to attempt to unsettle the minds of your pupils on topics with which you have no professional concern, and on which they are totally unprepared to follow you.

Having destroyed the authority of the Jewish Scriptures, you afterwards desire to set aside that verdict in which the annals and traditions of all nations have involuntarily concurred, by

* P. 249.

establishing the authenticity of these accounts. It is in vain, Sir, that you dwell on the fabulous and obscure relations of ancient history; and hang upon the phrase of "*Græcia mendax*;" and tell us that "we cannot trace the branches of any such original family, nor point out the time and manner in which they divided and spread over the globe." p. 255. All this has been long since accomplished by men of the most comprehensive learning and consummate talents, who have collected such a mass of evidence, and with such minuteness of detail, as was hardly to be expected on subjects of this remote antiquity and undefined extent.

The author* whom you have cited, after having compared the affinities of a hundred languages, and circumnavigated the bounds of human knowledge, was obliged to acquiesce in an account of the origin of the human race, very similar to that of Moses. He places Paradise in the regions of Cashmire, and gives it as his opinion, "that no spot on the whole earth unites so many advantages, and that it seems to be the most appropriate situation for the birth-place of the human race." p. 260.

But I forget, that I am insensibly deviating into argument. It is my present object not to debate this question with you on the grounds of evidence; but merely to point out

* Adelung's *Mithridates*. See also Townsend's *Life and Character of Moses*.

the impropriety of bringing it before such an audience, and on such an occasion. You confess yourself a sceptic, and that you have not been able to arrive at any clear or distinct conclusion, “whether our species owes its origin to “a single pair of human beings.”* This question you represent, as entirely unimportant, and “one which zoology does not possess the means “of solving.” On these grounds, you were not called upon to introduce it to the notice of your pupils, either by its connexion with your profession, or by the means which you possessed of imparting to them any useful information. The conclusion which I draw is this,—the mere vanity of displaying your sceptical opinions, has rendered you indifferent to the effect which they may produce on the morals and happiness of those who attend on your lectures.

If, then, you admit that the Mongolian, Ethiopian, and Malay varieties originally came from the centre of Asia, why should you deny the same fact with respect to the brute creation?

I remain, Sir, &c.

* P. 271.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

SINCE you have confessed that you cannot solve the problem concerning the origin of the human race by the assistance of philosophy, it might have been hoped that you would have lent a favourable ear to the intelligence of Revelation; at least, that, as the account of Moses could not be rectified by the calculations of science, you would have permitted your pupils to repose, in this respect, on the pillow of the national faith. It seems you are determined to inform them of the difficulties under which you labour, and to invite them to join you in sharing the burden. Perhaps it would not have been discreditable to your character as a teacher, if you had concealed these difficulties from their eyes; and in compassion to the ignorance and dangers of youth, had not thrown open the portals of that scepticism, to which the descent is so easy when compared with retreat.—*Facilis descensus Averni:—Sed revocare gradum.*

After the most attentive study of your opinions, I have not been able to arrive at any clear or satisfactory conclusion concerning your sentiments on the question—whether mankind consist of one species, or several. Allow me

to present to you a few of the contradictory statements which you have made on this subject, before you pronounce me either incorrigibly stupid, or wilfully blind. Pity me, Sir, I am only in the situation in which you represent Ajax—"I require nothing but day-light and fair play." p. 107.

"On reviewing the facts," you say, "which are detailed in the foregoing pages, we see, that, although the various races of men differ from each other in stature, as well as in other points, these differences are confined within narrower limits in man than in the species of domestic animals, and consequently that they do not prove diversity of species."* This reasoning does not appear very luminous; but we are enabled to collect from it, at least, your opinion. Now, I would beg you to contrast with this sentence the following, which occurs at p. 555: "I cannot yet assume it as a point fully proved, that all the varieties of mankind have proceeded from one and the same breed." Indeed, Sir, then I should suppose we ought to withhold our assent to attributing them to one and the same species. If it could be shown, that the Mongolian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay varieties have really proceeded from different stocks; then, it would prove them to be in fact, different species; and in as much as you are doubtful on

* P. 445, and p. 305.

this subject, you have no reason to pronounce it to be "the wrong opinion." p. 246.

As far as I can comprehend your meaning concerning a variety, as distinguished from a species, it consists in a certain unknown and unaccountable deviation "from the law of resemblance between parents and their offspring." * Thus as you remark, † two white cats will sometimes produce a black kitten amongst several white ones: and it is on this sage observation that you would attempt to account for the varieties in the human race, independent of climate, food, &c. If so, why is it that we do not discover white negroes mingled with the black? And why are not black children occasionally born amongst us?

"If it be allowed," you say, "that all men are descended from the same species, it does not follow that they all descend from the same family." ‡ No, Sir, it will not follow to any one who will maintain the absurdity, that God would unnecessarily create multitudes of the same species at the same moment. Yet, even admitting this absurdity, what becomes of those varieties, which you have already asserted not to be coeval with the race; but to arise from some accidental deviations from the laws of nature? But what are we to think of the wisdom of a writer who actually believes that the English and Scottish nations have originally descended from

* P. 446.

† P. 510.

‡ P. 516.

different stocks? * Yet the same writer, in a more serious moment, could be startled at the incalculable number of original species to which such wild suppositions would lead us.—“ If we admit this,” you observe, “ the number of species would be overwhelming.” †

Instead of these perplexing contradictions and palpable absurdities, it would have shown your prudence to have left your pupils reposing on the simple and sublime account of Moses. After all your researches, it is plain that you have nothing better to offer; and that sound philosophy, as well as history and tradition, conspire to confirm these relations of Scripture. By the help of dresses and costumes, you have contrived to make some pretty pictures, which you call Mongolian, Caucasian, Ethiopian, American, and Malay varieties. On the same principles, you might have extended the varieties of the human race to every country under heaven. If these are the discoveries which are to destroy the authenticity of the Old Testament, it is wonderful, indeed, that it should have survived the opinions of 3000 years. But though such speculations are ridiculous when viewed by men of real learning, they may prove of incalculable mischief amongst the half-educated members of your profession. It is solely on this account, not from their intrinsic weight or importance, that they are

* P. 454.

† P. 502.

worthy of any serious notice. The very obliquities of your reasoning may help to puzzle those who have no better clue to guide them, whilst your merit, as a Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, may conceal from them your ignorance and deficiency in all other departments of the "Natural History of Man."

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

AMIDST all this hesitation and uncertainty, respecting the diversities of mankind, which you have sometimes represented as sufficient to constitute different stocks and races,* and, at others, as nothing more than varieties of the same species,† we are surprised to find you so dogmatical and positive respecting the natural and essential inferiority of the Negroes to the Europeans; or, as you would express it, of the Ethiopian to the Caucasian variety. This dogmatism, on a subject so open to controversy, forms a remarkable exception to the general scepticism of your reasonings. But who can

* P. 260. 485, 486. 491.

† P. 270. 445. 474. 559.

account for the changes of Proteus, or oblige the sceptic to maintain a unity of argument ?

Verùm ubi correptum manibus vinclisque tenebis ;
 Tum variæ eludent species atque ora ferarum.
 Fiet enim subito sus horridus, atraque tigris,
 Squamosusque draco, &c. &c.

Since you appear, however, on the whole to resolve these diversities into varieties of the same species, it is necessary for us to endeavour to understand what you mean by this word. The following sentence is the most intelligible which I can find, as explanatory of your opinion :—
 “ Under certain circumstances, with which we
 “ are not well acquainted, a more important
 “ change of organization occurs. A new cha-
 “ racter springs up, and is propagated by gene-
 “ ration : this constitutes a *variety*, in the lan-
 “ guage of naturalists,” p. 97. Truly, Sir, this description savours marvellously of the occult qualities of the ancients. I should be glad to learn in what history of mankind you have ever met with occurrences of this nature. Unless you can produce something more determinate and authentic, than this explanation, I am afraid that the opinions of Hunter and Buffon, and your friend Blumenbach, which resolve these varieties of the human race into the effects of climate and food, &c. are likely to remain unaffected by your speculations.

Let us, however, attempt to argue the point on the principles which you have here laid down.

We will suppose that, at some unknown era of the world, and, “under circumstances with which we are not sufficiently acquainted,” these varieties began to take place, i. e. to use more common language, these national distinctions began to appear. Now, Sir, supposing that climate, and food, and manners, had nothing to do with these distinctions, why is it that the individuals of the same nation do not in time as much differ from each other, as these Mongolian or Caucasian varieties? The same circumstances, however odd and unaccountable they may be, would, in the course of events, naturally occur again and again, and would produce similar effects. You hint, indeed, that such is the case between the English and the Scotch, and that we are to account for the high cheek bones of the latter on this very principle. But I maintain that these principles, if carried to their full extent, would destroy all national peculiarities whatever; since there would be an endless variation of varieties in the same people, and it is probable that some of these varieties would be not less striking than those between Negroes and Europeans.

But, leaving these unintelligible speculations, I would now proceed to offer some remarks on the consequences which you deduce. Having laid it down as an incontrovertible fact, that these varieties exist, and that they arise from a difference of the internal organization, you endeavour to establish the consequence, that there

is a necessary and inherent inferiority of the Negroes to the Europeans. Now, with all deference to your superior knowledge, it appears to me, that you have adduced a sufficient number of facts to destroy your own argument. *First*, you inform us of the fine * “moral qualities of the Araucans of Chili,” and you allow, that “in the savage tribes of North America we meet with lofty sentiments of independence, &c. which would sustain a comparison with the most splendid examples in the more highly-gifted races.” Now this, Sir, is sufficient to shew that the superiority of the more highly-gifted races does not arise from any thing in their internal structure, but from the effects of government and civilization. So much for the American variety. Then, as to the unfortunate Negroes, † “you see no reason to doubt that taken altogether they are equal to any in natural goodness of heart,” and since you have shewn that they are capable of learning all kinds of “delicate manual labors;” that they form expert carpenters and watchmakers; that even the wild Bosjesman may become an accomplished draftsman; that some have excelled in music; others in painting; others in mathematics; others in physic, in poetry and theology,—‡ after these confessions, most of your readers will be inclined to think that they are not inferior to us “in natural goodness of head,” in

* P. 482.

† P. 496.

‡ P. 494. 498.

spite of the retreating forehead, and the depressed vertex.

Indeed, Sir, under these circumstances, I see no reason why * “ Missionaries or Bible Societies, the conductors of either Bell or Lancaster “ Schools,” should despair of overcoming the obstacles to their civilization and conversion to christianity. Since you have kindly furnished us with this information, we cannot any longer doubt, “ whether they are capable of fathoming “ the depths of science, and of understanding, “ and appreciating the doctrines and mysteries “ of our religion.” As to the latter point, Sir, I fear that you labour under some sad misapprehensions, since the Author of this religion designed it particularly for the poor and ignorant, and has told us that we must become as “ little children” ere we can enter into its spirit, or enjoy its benefits.

“ To expect,” * you add, “ that the Americans or Africans can be raised by any culture “ to an equal height in moral sentiments and intellectual energy with Europeans, appears to “ me quite as unreasonable as it would be to “ hope that the bull-dog may equal the greyhound in speed ; that the latter may be taught “ to hunt by scent, like the hound ; or that the “ mastiff may rival in talents and acquirements “ the sagacious and docile poodle.” I will not pretend to reconcile these opinions with the

facts which you have already furnished, nor desire you to consider whether comparisons of this nature are not degrading to our species, and destructive of mutual benevolence. But it may be worth your consideration, whether Europe, some ages ago, did not present a spectacle very similar to the most savage and uncultivated parts of Africa or America; whether the naked Pict exhibited any superiority on account of the prominence of his forehead, or the barbarous Gaul and German discovered any intellectual ability when hunting in their forests.

This kind of philosophy, which would subvert the natural dominion of mind over nature, and reduce the capabilities of the soul to the calculations of nerves, and fibres, and cerebral distinctions, is in direct opposition to those conclusions which are drawn from the history and experience of mankind. It has hitherto been deemed the triumph and tendency of science to render us more and more independent of these external and accidental distinctions; to shew that knowledge and education may elevate the lowest and meanest of our race, and bring them to an equality with the most favoured nations of the earth. This, Sir, has been the result of the progress of knowledge and civilization, on whatever land they have unfurled their standards. But, if your system of materialism should ever unhappily prevail amongst men, (of which, however, I have little apprehension, for it is opposed to the natural sentiments of the heart,) then fare-

well to every noble and philanthropic attempt to extend these blessings without regard to climate or colour. Before we proceed to civilize, we must determine the degree of latitude under which they dwell, and whether they belong to a Caucasian, Mongolian, or Ethiopian variety. Yet these are the inquiries of which you confidently assert,* “they afford the only light capable
 “ of directing us through the dark regions of
 “ metaphysics, and the only clue to direct our
 “ course through the intricate mazes of morals.”

I remain, Sir, &c.

LETTER IX.

SIR,

IN your reply to the charges of Mr. Abernethy,† you have endeavoured to ridicule that gentleman for making a few elementary truths in anatomy the medium of advancing against you some serious, but, as you believe, unfounded accusations. “Perhaps, however,” you say, “like the water in a medical prescription,
 “ they were meant only as an innocent vehicle

* P. 374.

† P. 3.

“ for the more active ingredients.” If you had adopted an equally harmless method for amusing your pupils during the course of your investigation on professional subjects, I should not have presumed to trouble you with any remarks. But, since you have blended these researches with attacks on the foundations of natural and revealed theology, and with sneers at the religious and civil institutions of your country, I have felt it my duty, as a parent, an Englishman, and a Christian, to protest against the introduction of such disorganizing principles into Lectures delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons.

Your hatred and contempt of the clergy have transported you beyond all decency of language; as when you speak,* of the “ vermin “ of priests and monks;” while such is your abhorrence of the “ worn out despotism of the “ old world,” that you hint all the royal families of Europe are becoming no better than so many idiots.† I should really hope, Sir, that they are not yet so far gone in this malady as not to perceive the consequences of your speculations.‡ “ The legislature, in voting “ public money to purchase the rich collection “ of Mr. Hunter, and to prepare a suitable “ building for its safe deposit, and the rulers of “ the College” in appointing you to the office of public Lecturer, never intended that the pur-

* P. 488.

† P. 460.

‡ P. 575.

suits of science should be perverted into beguilements of our youth to the wilds of Irreligion or Democracy. And yet, presuming on this idiotcy, you confidently ask the following question—
 “ Can we hope to proceed safely in legislation,
 “ in public institutions, or in education, without that acquaintance with the physical and
 “ moral qualities of the subject which such investigations are calculated to supply ?” p. 574.

To be serious, Sir, you have entirely mistaken the nature of that office to which you have been elected. You were chosen, I presume, as “ the
 “ Professor of Anatomy and Surgery ” to instruct young men in those sciences which are connected with the surgical profession : instead of which, you are delivering your sentiments on laws, and religion, and politics. To shew you how incompetent you are to direct them in these matters, I would now beg leave to recapitulate a few contradictions which I have met with in your Theologico-Politico-Physiologico speculations.

In p. 271, you say, “ that Zoology does
 “ not possess the means of solving the question,
 “ whether mankind have drawn their origin
 “ from one pair of human beings ;” whereas, in page 305, you assert “ that, however unwilling
 “ the European may be to trace up his pedigree
 “ to the same Adam,” yet that the differences of colour, &c. are altogether insufficient to establish diversity of species.

In p. 254, you represent ancient history as

affording no data for tracing back the human race to their first origin.—“ We cannot trace “ the branches of any such family, nor point “ out the time and manner in which they “ divided and spread over the face of the “ globe.” But, in pages 260 and 529, you assert that history and tradition point out the elevated central table-land of Asia as the original seat from which they have spread in various directions.

In p. 351, you ridicule your friend Blumenbach for believing that the shape of the cranium is sometimes affected by the savage customs of barbarous nations, in tying bandages round the heads of their children; but in p. 372, you entertain no doubt of the truth of such representations, and you reply, “ that if the fact “ can be established, the supposition on which “ any objection rests, must be unfounded.”

In numberless parts of your work, you ridicule the science of metaphysics, and the existence of “ immaterial agencies;” but, at the conclusion, you represent physiology “ as affording the only light capable of directing us “ through the mazes of this science;” and, at p. 477, you mention the New Hollanders, as sunk in the lowest state of barbarism, “ because “ they are destitute of religion, without any “ idea of a supreme Being, and with the feeblest “ notions of a future state.” Query. How are we to distinguish these savages from your philosophical physician, who looks upon death as

“ that awful moment, which constitutes the termination of our existence?” p. 577.

It is the general tendency of your opinions to represent the negroes as incapable of any advancement in arts and sciences, or in the mysteries of religion; but at p. 560 you assert, “ that they have the use of reason, and consequently of *perfectibility* !” — It would be easy for me, Sir, to adduce many other contradictions, both in your arguments and your facts; but these are sufficient, I trust, to convince you that you are totally incompetent for the task which you have undertaken, and that, if you would preserve the reputation which you have so justly acquired as a Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, you must for the future confine yourself to those inquiries which relate more immediately to your own profession.

I have little hope that any thing which I can say will reclaim a mind so far gone in sceptical opinions. I fear, Sir, that the vanity of displaying your acquirements has rendered you, like most infidel writers, too disdainful of others to listen to any sober argument. Yet I cannot part from you without this farewell recommendation: — “ Review your principles.” — It is not probable that a man of your talents and acquirements should have run into such palpable contradictions, unless there had been something radically bad in the first elements of his reasonings. That foundation must be insecure, on which a superstructure so tottering,

so full of cracks and chinks, and crevices, has been erected. It cannot be beneath even your abilities, Sir, to look into the evidences of a religion, in which Newton and Locke, and Boerhaave and Haller, confidently believed; which has been the medium of science and civilization to thousands of mankind; and which, if the hopes of philosophy shall ever be realized, “ must hereafter fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, even as the waters cover the sea.”

I remain, Sir, &c.

ONE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED CHRISTIANS.

TO THE PUPILS OF MR. LAWRENCE.

GENTLEMEN,

IT is my first object in this address to assure you, that I have not the smallest wish to diminish your confidence or respect for Mr. Lawrence, in his character as Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at the Royal College. In common with the public at large, I regard him as a very able and ingenious man in his own profession, and as perfectly competent to instruct you in those sciences which relate to surgery and medicine. It is only when he steps beyond

his own department, that I would beg you to suspend your opinions concerning his sentiments. You need not be informed that the greatest learning and ability in one department of human knowledge, by no means implies either superior judgment or information when extended to others, with which it has little or no connexion.

It is no reflection on the character of Mr. Lawrence, as an accomplished surgeon, that he is not deeply read in theology, nor very conversant with many of those subjects on which he has incidentally given his opinion. But it is of great importance that you should not transfer that deference and respect, which he may justly challenge as Professor of Anatomy, to his unauthoritative decisions on the laws and religion of his country. In this respect, Gentlemen, I trust that you will feel yourselves at liberty to form a candid and unbiassed decision of your own, uninfluenced by sneers or sarcasms, and unaffected by objections which have been again and again refuted. It is related of Newton, that he replied to Halley, who was urging some infidel arguments,—“ Mr. Halley, I am always
“ glad to hear you discoursing on mathematical
“ subjects; these you understand : but you are
“ quite ignorant of theological matters.”

In these Lectures, Mr. Lawrence has shewn a very inquisitive and excursive turn of mind, but the topics on which he treats are too multifarious to have allowed him to enter very

deeply into any, but those connected with his own profession. His erudition and eminence as a surgeon and anatomist, have necessarily confined his researches in ancient history, in the science of legislation, and, above all, in the study of natural and revealed Theology.

Under these circumstances, Gentlemen, you should listen to him with very different degrees of respect, when he is discoursing on his own profession, and when he is interfering with the professions of others. Thus when he smiles “at those satisfactory tests of personal merit, “the stars and ribbons and orders, of which “civilized men are so justly proud,” we may pardon him his ignorance of the nature and constitution of society, on account of his excellence and acquirements as a professor of surgery; but we are not obliged to acquiesce in such Utopian and impracticable speculations. Your natural good sense will inform you, that some distinctions of this kind are necessary in every polished community. Nor are you bound to follow him in his preference of the American to the English government, nor to decide in favor of a constitution which has not lasted half a century, against one which has survived the shocks of ages, and raised a little island to be the mistress and admiration of the world.

Above all, let me caution you against those sceptical opinions and infidel prejudices, which, I lament to observe, are so frequently blended

with his reasonings on professional subjects. It is one main object of these Lectures to establish, not only the connexion, but the identity of life with organization—nay, I fear to show, that we have no clear or certain assurance of the immortality of the soul, and of its existence in a future state. Now, before you admit these conclusions, let me beg you to read the “Natural Theology” of Paley, a work, which I am sure will protect you against the influence of this debasing materialism, and will show, that the knowledge of your own profession may furnish you with the best defence against these physiological perversions.

It is probable that many of you have received a religious education, and that you are, in some degree, acquainted with the doctrines and evidences of the Christian religion. Now, you need not be informed, that sneers at priests, and ridicule of religious forms and ceremonies, should not be allowed to destroy the force of those habits of piety in which you have been brought up. If you preserve the habit of attending constantly at public worship on the sabbath, you will possess a strong preservative against the infection of these immoral and irreligious principles.

I can, in some degree, sympathize in the dangers with which you are surrounded, because I was once placed in a similar situation. The metropolis affords many temptations to the passions of youth, and your own profession

has an involuntary tendency, perhaps, to diminish that modesty which is our natural guard against the violence of sensual gratifications. Under these circumstances, should you part with your belief in christianity, you will hardly be restrained by the dictates of conscience, or the considerations of expediency; but if you can ever be persuaded to believe, that “death is the termination of existence,” then it would be in vain to urge on you any of the arguments even of natural religion.

In a work which has lately appeared,* the causes of a sceptical turn of mind are admirably pointed out, and particularly as they relate to the medical profession. What has been already so ably accomplished, I will not attempt in an inferior manner. I have endeavoured to refute the positions of Mr. Lawrence, by his own authority:—to exhibit the inconsistency of his principles by confronting the different parts of his work, and by placing them together. If I have succeeded, I may say in the language of Terence, “*suo sibi gladio hunc jugulo.*”

I remain, &c.

* “Remarks on Scepticism, as connected with the Subjects of Organization and Life,” by the Reverend T. Rennell, M.A.

THE END.